

Policy Launch Speech: Arthur Calwell, Opposition Leader (ALP)

St Kilda Town Hall, Melbourne, 10 November 1966

“There are many issues in this election which you must consider carefully and well before Election Day.

The most important issue in this campaign is conscription, the conscription of a section of our 20 year old youths, against their wishes and their wills, to kill or be killed in the undeclared civil war in Vietnam and the threatened extension of conscription to all 20 year olds and other age groups to increase our unwarranted and unnecessary commitments. We can prevent all this happening by defeating the menace on next Saturday fortnight.

The Menzies Government made the first blunder over Vietnam nearly two years ago. It blundered equally badly over Suez in 1958. The Holt Government is determined to increase the extent of the Vietnam blunder. So unimpressed are our men of military age about the need to fight in the war in Vietnam that none of them will volunteer. No one can deny this fact; not even our own bellicose Prime Minister.

The Government having failed to attract volunteers has resorted to conscription to maintain our army. It asks for your endorsement. I hope you will refuse it most emphatically. Conscription is immoral, it is unjust and it is a violation of human rights. It must and will be defeated.

There are 600,000 Australian mothers with sons between 15 and 20 years of age and many of these boys could be sent away to die or be wounded in the long cruel, dirty war that is raging in Vietnam. I call on those 600,000 mothers and their husbands and their other sons and daughters to tell Mr Holt that the lives of their eligible sons are too precious to be squandered by the man who has pledged this country to go all the way with LBJ. I doubt if any one of the Government's Senators and Representatives who voted for conscription, and that includes the splinter group duo, has a son fighting in Vietnam. It is so easy therefore for all these anti-Labor Members of Parliament to regard the lives of other people's children as expendable and to dispose of them in any way they think fit and without remorse or regret.

There is no difficulty in separating conscripts from members of the regular Army and so we will act in consultation with the American authorities, immediately we become the Government, to withdraw all conscripts in Vietnam. Our first act as a Government will be to abolish conscription and give orders that all conscripts in camp in Australia shall be discharged forthwith. The remainder of our troops will be brought home at the earliest practicable moment after consideration with our Allies and so as not to endanger the lives of any Australian or allied troops. While our troops are in Vietnam, we undertake to give them any support they might need. We will never let them down.

As it is immoral to conscript our youths to die in Vietnam, so it will be immoral not to withdraw them when we become the Government. This we will do. The Labor view on Vietnam are supported by opinions expressed by the late President J.F. Kennedy,

and by other distinguished Americans like his two famous brothers, Senators Robert and Edward Kennedy and by Senators Fulbright and Mike Mansfield and 24 other outstanding Senators.

Australia must possess her own independent foreign policy and its own defence policy to enable it to honour its obligations to the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Nations and to carry out its treaty obligations with other countries. Australia's dependence for its defence on other nations is due to the failure of the Menzies and Holt Governments to develop Australia's defence capacity to the full.

We are spending too much money on expensive sophisticated defence equipment, purchased overseas, the financial cost of which appears to rise beyond reason and beyond the control of the Government and with its value suspect.

Our policy provides for a voluntary defence force: properly equipped, and possessing modern weapons of war; being capable of great mobility within Australia and its own environs; having sufficient range and strike power to deter aggressors; being capable of use as part of United Nations forces for the maintenance of peace.

We will raise Citizen Military Forces which can be rapidly mobilised in time of war. We will promote the Australian aircraft industry; use Australian shipyards to build and service naval and supply vessels; encourage the manufacture in Australia of modern, small, ordnance and mobile equipment including light and medium armoured fighting vehicles; and encourage Australian manufacturers to tender for defence equipment, particularly in the field of electronics and to provide equipment manufactured by Australian industries.

Having dealt with matters of foreign policy and defence and before outlining our policy on matters of domestic concern, I have great pleasure in announcing that the rural policy speech of the party will be delivered tomorrow night by our great friend and former distinguished Minister for Commerce and Agriculture, Mr. R.T. Pollard, MP, at Inverell in the Gwydir electorate.

In the matter of social services, we will provide the following increased benefits to cost \$243 million. The annual increased amount for each group is stated against that group.

We will:

- Establish a universal scheme of national welfare by grouping age, invalid, widows, unemployment pensions and sickness benefits, to provide a guarantee that no citizen, irrespective of dependants, would have an income of less than \$14 per week (\$73 million).
- Provide half-pension for all persons over 70 without a means test as a first step towards abolishing the means test (\$72 million).
- Liberalise deductions on permissible incomes by deducting only \$1 on every \$2 earned above the permissible income for full pension entitlement (\$20 million).
- Permit child-endowment payments to be capitalised for some purchases (nil).
- Increase payments for child endowment for the second and subsequent children (\$52 million).
- Double existing maternity allowances (\$7 million).
- Double funeral benefit rates (\$2.5 million)

- Provide a capital or rental subsidy of \$3 for \$1 for sheltered workshops (\$1 million).
- Increase grants under the Aged Persons Homes Act to \$3 for each \$1 raised (\$2 million).

We will conduct an inquiry into the needs of Australia's mentally retarded children. We will help in every way all physically handicapped people to use their abilities so that they can earn a living wage and also help the production of needed industrial equipment. Labour supports a high basic minimum rate of aged pension for all pensioners whether married or single, plus additional special allowances for those with special needs.

When we become the Government, we will establish a joint Parliamentary committee to review the Repatriation Act and its administration particularly now that the real value of repatriation benefits has, in each instance, fallen to a very low level. We will enable all World War I returned men to be treated in repatriation hospitals whether their illnesses or disabilities were war-caused or not. We have moved for this in Parliament several times and every Government Senator and Representative has voted against us for each occasion.

We will give the benefit of the doubt to an ex-serviceman when medical opinion differs as to the origin of his disability. We will also grant medical benefits to the wives of TPI pensioners.

The Labour Government will make war on poverty in Australia on the lines first laid down by the late President Kennedy in the United States and followed so successfully since by President Johnson. This means the giving of a just share of all the opportunities in our affluent society to every citizen.

We must make Australia a proud, contented and free country. Our war on poverty does not deal with statistics only, but it cares for our fellow Australians, who are living, feeling, thinking people. The war on poverty must cover the needs of the aged, the widowed, the sick, the handicapped, the mentally retarded and the medically unfit. Their standards must be raised to the level of the rest of the community. Today they are left to wither in ghettos of economic hardship. Our Government will put an end to this unnecessary hardship.

Our policy on education includes:

- The establishment of a Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. In 1961 and 1963, I promised that the Labor Party would establish a Ministry of Education. This was strongly opposed by the then Prime Minister and his colleagues.
- The holding of an inquiry into all aspects of primary, secondary and technical education in government and non-government schools to determine the needs, in order of priority, of each system of education.
- The immediate adoption of the Martin committee's proposals for Commonwealth assistance to teacher training, so that a sufficient number of teachers will be trained annually for both government and non-government schools.
- A special grant of \$20 million a year to help State Departments of Education to overcome the immediate crisis in government schools caused by accommodation shortages and the need to rebuild and modernise their older schools in inner suburbs of capital cities.

- The continuation of existing benefits to non-government schools.
- The payment of \$22 million a year to qualified lay teachers in primary and secondary non-government schools on the basis of 60c a week for each child in each primary school and 80c a week for each child in each secondary school. We will use the committees set up by the Science Blocks legislation to distribute the \$22 million in the way chosen by such committees.

In the matter of tertiary education, we will implement the recommendations of the Australian Universities' Commission.

There is much public concern about the present state of the arts in Australia. A Labor Government will follow the example of Britain, Canada and other advanced countries and establish machinery to develop a national policy of aid to Australian arts and letters.

In Government, we will amend our income-tax laws –

- To ensure that taxation is levied, and deductions are allowed in a more equitable manner.
- To reduce discrimination in favour of foreign capital invested in Australia, and to ensure a greater share of Australian ownership in industry conducted in Australia.
- To review existing double taxation agreements.
- To eliminate speculation in land and other assets.

The Australian Labor Party will restrict and regulate the extent to which control of Australian resources and industries is subject to overseas domination and to overseas use and exploitation. There are a number of types of activity which need immediate attention. These include:

- Resources and industries necessary for rapid national development and essential for Australian defence and, in particular, resources and industries which provide power and fuel.
- Natural resources and established industries which have become, or are likely to become, subject to foreign control or undue influence.
- The promotion and encouragement of local processing of Australia's natural resources.
- Facilities which provide finance by capital and loan, including hire-purchase finance.
- Insurance and shipping services which can safeguard overseas reserves.
- The working of the tariff Industries, both locally owned and foreign owned, where there are restrictive practices and monopoly control.
- Resources subject to development by the States lack the ability to provide the finance necessary to secure development.

In order to secure coordinated development of natural resources, balanced development and adequate defence potential, the Labour Government will underwrite the provision of adequate capital and will modernise existing administration to carry out any of these activities. Some of them involve cooperation between the State and the Commonwealth, some invite the participation of private capital, some depend

upon the utilisation of overseas techniques, while some require better organisation of the local capital market in the public interest.

Labor aims to establish a comprehensive national health service, both curative and preventative and available to all who desire to avail themselves of it. We believe that medical care is not only a basic human right, but also is in the economic interest of Australia. As part of its national health scheme, Labour will, in the next three years, re-establish free hospital services. Further, Labor will provide for the modernisation of facilities for the treatment of mental diseases and the training of specialist staff.

Realising the urgent necessity of dental care, the Australian Labor Party will provide free dental attention for children up to 16 years of age and for students up to 21 as part of an ultimate national dental service.

Labor will expand the activities of the Commonwealth Acoustic Laboratory and Artificial Limb Factories, with a view to providing free, to all individuals, hearing aids, artificial limbs and medical and surgical appliances.

My party, ever interested in the physical mental wellbeing of the people, will intensify the programme of research, especially in the fields of cancer, cardiovascular disease and industrial medicine, including the problems of environment.

Labor will seek, in cooperation with the States, to establish Australia-wide standards in drugs and food, and will cease the charge on the patient for drugs made available under the National Health Scheme.

When Labor was in power previously, it provided free hospitalisation which was subsequently abandoned by the Menzies Government. It initiated the campaign against tuberculosis and sponsored other measures. When returned, it will continue to wage war against disease and will adopt such measures as will contribute to the cure of the afflicted, the alleviation of suffering and disability, the decrease in mortality and to the increased physical and mental wellbeing of every citizen.

It is our intention as a Government to provide:

- Adequate grants to the States to build homes at the lowest possible interest rate, for sale or rental, giving priority those most in need.
- Subsidies for tenants or purchasers who, through bereavement or injury, cannot meet a prescribed economic rental or payment.

We will raise the maximum War Service Homes loan limit to \$10,000 and extend the purposes for which supplementary loans are made available at reasonable interest rates. We will establish a homes finance division of the Commonwealth Bank including architectural, inspection and insurance services, to provide finance at reasonable interest rates and up to 95 per cent of the value of the couple's first home to a limit of \$10,000. We will restore the allocation for War Service Homes to \$75 million and end the rationing scheme now being applied.

We will reduce home mortgage by the amount of \$200 for each child born during the period of the mortgage. And as announced earlier in this speech, we will allow capitalisation of child endowment. This will be effected on any period of a child's life between one and 16 years of age, for any number of children in a family with a maximum advance of \$2,000.

The Labor Government will honour Australia's international obligations by ratifying all ILO conventions that are within our constitutional powers. We will introduce equal pay for work of equal value in the Commonwealth Public Service and to its instrumentalities. We will grant four weeks annual leave for Commonwealth public servants. We will support this principle before industrial tribunals.

We will consult with State Government as to the adoption of ILO equal pay decisions. We will establish a woman's bureau section of the Department of Labour and National Service.

We will take action to rescind the penal provisions of Sections 109 and 111 of the Commonwealth Arbitration Act.

We will establish a productivity index and a committee of review to prepare recommendations in an advisory capacity to the Commonwealth Statistician. We will intervene before the Arbitration Commission to support the ACTU in its application for an immediate restoration of automatic quarterly basic wage adjustments to meet the increasing cost of living.

Labor will do everything possible to encourage the training of more apprentices to satisfy the needs of Australian industry.

Labor will amend the Commonwealth Employees Compensation Act with a view to removing existing injustices, securing adequate entitlements for injured and disabled workers, and providing satisfactory machinery for the hearing of claims.

The Labor Party is conscious of the changing scene in the employment of white-collar workers who have to an increasing degree joined with other industrial organisations represented by the ACTU before the Arbitration Commission to seek better remuneration and conditions of employment. This important section of the community is entitled to wage and salary justice.

A Labor Government will take an active interest in the welfare of its own Commonwealth employees and intervene wherever possible to make submissions on their behalf and on behalf of all white-collar workers up to the level of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission.

Labor will create a section of the Department of Labour and National Service as a permanent organisation to deal with the effects of automation and mechanisation.

Labor will set up a joint organisation comprising Government, ACTU and employer representatives for the purpose of continuing joint consultation and planned introduction of automation for the transition to the era of the new technology, with beneficial results instead of the hardship and industrial chaos that can and will flow from the effects of automation without proper planning and adequate consultation between Governments, employers and trade union organisations.

On forming a Government, the Labor Party will hold a referendum at which time people will be asked to give the Commonwealth Parliament control over prices and interest rates. The people themselves will decide if the Federal Parliament is to have power to pass laws in respect of two of the most vital factors affecting the economy. In seeking these powers, a Labor Government will not set up a bureaucracy or introduce wholesale rationing. It will give justice to wage and salary earners, to pensioners, to those on superannuation and fixed incomes.

The Liberal Country Party Government controls wages and nothing else; it permits prices to continue their alarming spiral. The Holt Government has used the political rule of depriving the States of sufficient money and forcing them to make the unpopular decisions. The States have had to enforce severe tax-raising measures. While the Federal Government denies any responsibility, fares, gas and electricity charges and hospital fees have soared.

Hand in hand with control of prices goes the need for a complete readjustment of relationships between the States and the Commonwealth. Under the existing arrangement, the States are being forced to introduce higher charges for essential services and these charges hit hardest the pockets of the poorer sections of the community.

These are the people who are paying the price of the Liberal Government's mismanagement of the economy: these are the people a Labor Government will protect.

The Australian Labor Party declares that the balanced development of this nation must be accepted as a national responsibility because it is necessary for the effective occupation of this continent. Sound economic growth must be based on the wise use of our natural resources. The Labor Party undertakes to proceed with a vigorous development programme to build economic strength with rising living standards.

A new exciting phase of national development in processing our raw materials will make a valuable contribution to our defence potentials. "Develop to Defend" is a slogan for the nation.

Public enterprise has a particular obligation to do those things which private enterprise is not doing adequately or is not doing at all. Commonwealth-State cooperation is essential to a broad programme of development and where found desirable the Commonwealth should join with the State and private enterprise in the promotion of industry for our economic growth and self-sufficiency.

A national conservational authority will be established to incorporate the highly skilled technical officers, engineers and scientists of the Snowy Mountain Authority to undertake, in association with the States, a national plan of water, land and forest development. North-western Australia, the Northern Territory and North Queensland are areas urgently in need of development.

In Australia, the driest continent in the world, about three-fourths of the surface water is in the northern part of Australia; 36 per cent of Australia's water run-off is in north Queensland. The loss of that run-off into the sea is the tragedy of the tropics. The Commonwealth, in cooperation with the States, will accept a more responsible role in a programme of reforestation.

Encouragement will be given to local authorities and land owners to plant forests.

The Bureau of Mineral Resources will be more directly under the control of the Minister for National Development and will be placed on similar organisational basis as the CSIRO.

Concern is expressed with the present exploitation of our mineral resources. Effective control will be exercised to protect Australia's interest and equity in companies holding mineral leases. As population growth is related to industrial expansion, Labor will give high priority to processing our extensive mineral resources and will promote our manufacturing industries. A more vigorous search for minerals and phosphate

rock will be undertaken and rewards will be given to prospectors for exploration work and successful search.

Labor will establish a division of the Department of National Development to implement a national fuel policy. It will have regard to our national resources in coal, oil, natural gas, water and nuclear power. It will cooperate with the State Government in establishing a joint fuel board to discover, conserve, develop and market fuel and power resources, including atomic power and natural gas.

Australia's uneven population spread calls for immediate positive action. A division of decentralisation will be established under the Minister for National Development.

A Federal Labor Government will convene a ministerial meeting with the States to determine respective responsibilities and priorities in a national decentralisation, a Labor Government will establish a balanced development fund, the capital of which will be augmented by annual contributions from the Commonwealth.

Labor envisages the concentrated development of specific towns and regions by the infusion of selected industry, housing public utilities and educational and social facilities and other services to a stage where growth is self-generating.

Labour will seek to decentralise public enterprise and administration where practical, and will also examine the constitutional possibility of offering incentives in taxation concessions and concessions in charges for the use of public utilities for industries being established or expanded to such centres.

Country industries and consumers will be freed from the sales tax levied on the amount by which the cost of goods and products is increased by freight and other charges. Labor in Government will take action to relieve country telephone users of the high cost of 'trunk' line telephone charges which discourage industrial expansion. Public enterprise and Government departments will be established in country centres.

The establishment of national parks and the protection of our distinctive flora and fauna is an objective of the Labor Party. A national programme in cooperation with the States would also aid our tourist industry.

The Commonwealth Government has a role to play in the promotion of our fishing industry in remote coastal regions, thus spreading population and satisfying an economic demand for seafood and reducing our dependence on foreign supplies.

A Labor Government will help to provide the loan money to complete the Ord River scheme. The Western Australian Government was encouraged to go ahead with stage one of the scheme but the Holt Government will not assist with stage two. The fact is that the success of stage one of the scheme (the diversion dam) depends upon the completion of stage two (the main dam).

The Ord River scheme, more than anything else, reflects the basic drive and spirit of the WA people. It reflects their great effort to break away from the type of thinking which for years has caused culpable neglect of the vast northern area of a State with significant agricultural, mineral and in some cases, industrial potential. The Ord River scheme, once started, should have continued on to completion.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Holt, says the Ord scheme is of little value. I don't believe him. In any case, it is too late to judge the scheme on purely economic grounds. The Ord scheme should be regarded in a much wider concept. It should be looked on as

part of a general scheme of development, and the development of the north should be a vital consideration in the defence of Australia.

Our Government will re-establish the Inter-State Commission to coordinate all types of interstate transport in Australia, including rail, road, air and water and to regulate conditions of carriage. Section 101 of the Constitution declares: "There shall be an Inter-State Commission with such powers of adjudication and administration as the Parliament deems necessary for the execution and maintenance within the Commonwealth of the provisions of this Constitution relating to trade and commerce, and of all laws made there under".

The Labor Party believes that the Inter-State Commission should be the authority to formulate a national programme so that all forms of transport can be coordinated. It is the only way to reduce our far too heavy transport costs.

The Australian National Shipping Line must enter the overseas shipping trade to release Australia from the stranglehold of the international shipping monopoly. The Australian Nation Line has achieved great success on the coastal trade. The line could compete in the overseas shipping trade at a modest profit. The serious increases in freight charges on overseas trade are adversely affecting our national economy. Rates on wool and refrigerated cargoes have risen by over 100 per cent since 1949.

The Minister for Trade, Mr. McEwen, said last May "The annual freight charges on Australia's exports and imports had climbed to a staggering \$600 million a year".

Labor's policy provides for modern shipping services to be maintained by Australian built, owned and manned ships, and for this purpose, a Labor Government will expand the Commonwealth owned shipping service.

A Labor Government will progressively construct, charter and operate sufficient ships to carry an equitable share of Australia's exports and imports.

A national inquiry will be held into wharfage, stevedoring facilities and future cargo-handling requirements. Labor believes that the Commonwealth should construct and maintain adequate dry docking facilities. We will help to establish a ship building industry in Tasmania.

A Labor Government will spend all the fuel tax paid by road users on the construction, improvement and maintenance of roads and will seek to achieve uniform traffic laws. Labor agrees that the question of road safety should become a national responsibility. A Labor Government, in cooperation with the States will make grants for the purpose of meeting the cost of research work into the causes of road accidents.

A Labor Government will hold an Inquiry into the operations of air services with a view to the staggering of timetables and the rationalisation of services. We will maintain the two-airline policy and will administer the policy fairly.

A Labor Government will support and uphold a vigorous and expanding immigration programme, administered with sympathy, understanding and tolerance. Our policy will be based on the need –

- To strengthen and protect Australia's nation and economic security.
- To safeguard the welfare and promote the Integration of all it's citizens.
- To preserve our democratic system and the balanced development of our nation.

□ To avoid the introduction into Australia of the difficult social and economic problems which will follow from an influx of people having different standards of living, traditions and culture.

Australians are descended to a predominant degree, from people of English, Scotch, Irish and Welsh origin. That predominance should not be disturbed. The Labor Party, which formulated, inaugurated and built our great migration scheme, gives and always has given, a warm welcome to migrants from other lands.

It remembers with pride and gratitude, the contributions made over the past 178 years by people of Continental European origin, including those of German, Scandinavian, French, Italian, Dutch and Greek blood, and those who came from the Lebanon and from Asia.

The Labor Party is appreciative of what has been and is being accomplished by the 500,000 British and Irish post World War II migrants and the 500,000 people from many countries in Europe who migrated here during the same period. Labor believes that our policy of assimilation and absorption is the only sensible policy for Australia to pursue.

It is determined to continue to oppose, for many obvious reasons any attempt to create a multi-racial society in our midst. We can and do absorb migrants from Asia as well as from Europe and we shall continue to do so, but a policy that avoids the tragedies of Ceylon, Fiji, Indonesia and Singapore – to give but a few instances – is one to be supported.

It must have the support of all Australians, young and old and whether born in this country or not, who are mindful of their heritage and the need to maintain and improve their living standards and social conditions.

The Australian Labor Party believes that the welfare of the aboriginal people is a national responsibility and as such should be primarily a function of the Commonwealth Parliament. Labor will hold a referendum to grant to the Commonwealth Parliament the necessary constitutional powers.

Labor condemns the absence of a national plan for aboriginal advancement as being a chronic national disgrace and will establish such a plan. Labor will develop the Northern Territory as a model for all Australia in respect of basic human rights, health, welfare, education, employment and housing for the aboriginal people. Labor will wage a determined war on poverty and disease among the Aborigines and, in particular, will seek to eliminate tuberculosis, Hansen's disease and yaws within five years. Labor will give financial assistance to the States to assist progressive programmes for Aborigines and islanders.

Labor will submit the proposed referenda to repeal Section 127 and amend Section 51 of the Constitution which the Government appears to have abandoned.

The Minister for Territories in the next Labor Government will bring down such additional legislation as may be necessary to help the people of Papua New Guinea on the road to independence.

We will devote 1 per cent of Australia's national income to foreign aid for underdeveloped countries.

And so I ask you to give us your mandate to do the things which I have promised we will do. We will not fail you.

In the first 100 days after the 26th Parliament meeting under the leadership of another Labor Government, we hope to be able to report to you and to point with pride to the legislation we have placed on the statute books in accordance with our promises. We believe that the realisation of these promises will contribute greatly to the peace, order and good government of Australia and the advancement of all its peoples.

Let me conclude on the words of a great American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

*“Were half the power that fills the world with terror,
Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts.
Given to redeem the mind from human error,
There were no need for arsenals, nor forts.”*

Source: Compiled from The Canberra Times, 11 November 1966, p. 14 and The Melbourne Herald.